

## RUSSIA: GREAT POWER ASPIRATIONS AND ITS RESULTING NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

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**RUSSIA: GREAT POWER ASPIRATIONS AND ITS RESULTING NATIONAL  
SECURITY STRATEGY**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Much has changed since the toppling of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. The world is no longer divided between two super powers. The former Soviet Union is now divided into 15 independent countries, each with its own government and national strategic interests and objectives. For much of the past 15 years, Russia has maintained a relatively low profile in international affairs with only hints at her long range national security strategy. With suspension of her participation in the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and her more recent intervention in Georgia, however, Russia has taken significant steps toward restoration of her role as a major great power in Eurasia. The question is what these events signal regarding Russia national security strategy? What are the goals of that strategy? What ways has she chosen to achieve her ends, and how will she resource them? This project attempts to answer these questions.





## RUSSIA: GREAT POWER ASPIRATIONS AND ITS RESULTING NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

A new administration brings with it new vision and direction. When Dmitry Medvedev became President of Russia in May 2008, one of the first actions he took was to order the development of a new Russian National Security Strategy, one which he hoped would announce Russia's new role in the international community.<sup>1</sup> The strategy is in draft form and is expected to be approved during a Russian National Security Council meeting in early 2009. While the details of the draft strategy are close-hold, it will focus on certain key goals, directed towards restoring Russia to great power status, to include a multipolar world with Russia playing a major role; Russia as a world economic power; and Russia regaining prominence in Central Asia while negating United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) inroads.

Much has changed since the toppling of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. The world is no longer divided between two super powers. The Soviet Union has disintegrated into 15 independent countries, each with its own government and national strategic interests and objectives. Russia no longer has the international position she once had as the Soviet Union. With suspension of her participation in the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and her more recent intervention in Georgia, Russia has taken significant steps toward restoration of her role as a major conventional power in Eurasia. Using Russia's withdrawal from the CFE Treaty as a breakpoint, this paper will examine recent Russian actions in an effort to understand the national security strategy of the Putin/Medvedev era. What are the goals of this strategy? What ways has she chosen to achieve her ends, and how will she resource them?

The Russian announcement in December 2007 that she had suspended participation in the CFE Treaty should not have come as a surprise. This was a long time coming. Arms control limitation treaties were a useful tool during the Cold War. They helped to maintain the balance of power and to limit further defense spending. These treaties had their limitations and did not satisfy all participants. The CFE Treaty was signed on 19 November 1990 and entered into force 17 July 1992.<sup>2</sup> It was originally signed by 16 NATO and 6 Warsaw Pact States. It established equal levels for five categories of offensive weapons, to include battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, artillery, combat aircraft, and attack helicopters.<sup>3</sup> The treaty included both destruction and inspection protocols and was “aimed to reach a balance of conventional forces in Europe between the two groups of state parties following a forty month long reduction phase.”<sup>4</sup> The treaty imposed limits on those weapons the signatories could possess between the Atlantic Ocean and the Ural Mountains. “To guard against offensives designed to bypass central Europe, specific ‘flank zone’ limits restricted weapons stationed in northern and southern Europe.”<sup>5</sup> The treaty was written in such a way that as new countries joined NATO, their limits were set by bloc and not individual country.

By 1991, a year after the treaty signature, the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union had disintegrated. Russia, as the “inheritor state” to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.), was burdened by the controls placed on the Warsaw Pact, whereas NATO’s relative burden did not change, as the new members brought with them their share of their former Warsaw Pact allowances. Of further importance, the United States (U.S.) was hardly affected at all, as her forces in Europe were drawing down, and she still retained an overwhelming force projection capability. Thus the CFE

Treaty was one more signpost pointing to the dramatic relative change in international importance between the U.S. and Russia. While the parties to the treaty continued to follow its protocols, they agreed to relook the treaty protocols in view of the new world situation during the CFE's first review conference in May 1996. The Adaptation Negotiations (as the follow on discussions were called) were held in January 1997.<sup>6</sup>

Nine years to the day of the anniversary of the CFE Treaty, the treaty signatories (now 30 in number) signed the Adaptation Agreement at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Conference in Istanbul, Turkey. Important updates to the CFE included: raising quotas on mandatory on-site inspections; requiring signatories to provide more information than under basic CFE; replacing the old NATO and Warsaw Pact structure with one that takes into consideration the new world construct; and, establishing a territorial ceiling on equipment.<sup>7</sup>

Three countries, Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan ratified the Adaptation. Russia was satisfied with the changes because they took into consideration the expansion of NATO. NATO countries, to include the U.S., were not as satisfied. They were unhappy with Russian military activities in both South Ossetia and Moldova, where the Russians had stationed troops, and used their ratification of the Adapted Treaty as a carrot to get Russia to withdraw its troops from both areas before they would ratify the Adapted Treaty. The U.S. and NATO have remained steadfast on this issue.<sup>8</sup>

Russia, on the other hand, has not varied her stance. She wants a buffer zone between herself and NATO. Any possibility of countries on her flanks joining NATO is a security concern, which she is loathe to accept. Alternatively, the flank countries (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) and the former Warsaw Pact countries (the Czech

Republic, Hungary, Poland, etc.) appear to be just as concerned about Russia and would like the protection that NATO promises. The result is a stalemate. From 12-15 June 2007, the Extraordinary Conference of State Parties was held at the behest of Russia, in Vienna, Austria, to resolve the stalemate, but to no avail. On 14 June 2007, then-President Vladimir Putin announced that Russia would suspend her participation in the CFE until the Adapted Treaty had been ratified. The Russian Parliament endorsed Putin's plan of suspension in November and the Russian Foreign Ministry formally announced the suspension on 12 December 2007.<sup>9</sup>

With this backdrop, what can we determine about Russian national security strategy?<sup>10</sup> There were four issues which influenced the Russian action to suspend her participation in the CFE and which impact Russia's National Security Strategy goals: the U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 2001; NATO invitations to both Ukraine and Georgia to join the alliance; Russian perception that the CFE was both a military and psychological impediment to regaining her great power status in the world; and, the Western recognition of Kosovo independence, the latter of which most likely set the precedent for subsequent Russian policy toward South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, which entered into force in 1972, had a significant, though not immediate, effect on Russia. The treaty barred the deployment of "nationwide defense systems against long-range or strategic ballistic missiles but allowed limited defenses against short- and medium-range missiles."<sup>11</sup> Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union were parties to this treaty. The surprise terrorist attacks in the U.S. on 11 September 2001 brought the United States out of the "it can't happen here"

mentality to realize that terrorists could and would attack the Continental U.S. On 13 December 2001, and in accordance with the ABM Treaty protocols, the U.S. formally announced she was withdrawing from the ABM Treaty. The rationale given for the withdrawal included the increased threat from rogue states such as Iran and North Korea; the need to test and deploy a ballistic missile defense system to protect the U.S. homeland to counter these potential threats; and, the importance of developing a complementary missile defense program with her allies and other friendly foreign countries.<sup>12</sup>

While Russia objected at the time to the U.S. withdrawal, it took no further decisive action. Escalating the issue into a crisis was not acceptable because Russia was not ready militarily or politically. The Russian military had declined seriously in the previous decade and was in the early stages of a rebuilding effort in 2002. Politically, Russia was no longer considered a major power. One only had to look at the Kosovo crisis (March-June 1999) to see how far Russian prominence had fallen. Russian President Putin was unwilling to make a stand politically against the U.S. only to have the Russian objection ignored by the other world powers. Putin also still had hopes of mobilizing both world and American public opinion to force the U.S. to reconsider the withdrawal. At a minimum, by taking the high ground (i.e., it was not Russia who was withdrawing from the treaty), he apparently hoped Russia would gain some credibility with the international community and give him time to reconstitute Russian national power.

Putin also likely saw America's interests and actions vis-à-vis the ABM Treaty as analogous to Russia's interests in the CFE Agreement. In early 2007, when the U.S.

began serious negotiations with both Poland and the Czech Republic to station missiles and a missile tracking radar in these countries respectively, as part of a European theater missile defense shield to counter the Iranian and North Korean long-range missile threats, the Russian strategy became more energetic. At the same time Moscow began to draw comparisons to CFE.<sup>13</sup> The U.S. development of a ballistic missile defense system in Europe has been a source of tension with Russia since early 2007. Both countries met several times in 2007 and 2008 to resolve their differences. Discussions at the G8 Summit in Germany in June 2007 and in Russia in October 2007 were unsuccessful as was the meeting in Sochi, Russia in April 2008. While these meetings identified numerous recommendations, they failed to resolve the differences.<sup>14</sup>

A specific Russian objection to the U.S. missile defense plans in Europe is that the placement of missiles close to Russia's borders "poses a threat to Russia's strategic nuclear deterrent and retaliatory capability and is really directed against Russia, not against some non-existent Iranian or North Korean threat."<sup>15</sup> The Russians are adamant that the missiles could be easily reconfigured to attack Russian strategic systems, particularly in the boost phase of launch, when Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM's) are most vulnerable. This is extremely important for two reasons. First, the deployment degrades the Russian strategic deterrent, in that as both the U.S. and Russia continue to reduce the size of the strategic force, in accordance with the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, Russia would have less of a deterrent force in which to take action if required against either the U.S. and/or Chinese threat and American PATRIOT missiles could take out many of the Russian ICBMS in the boost phase. Secondly, with less of a deterrent force, Russia would have fewer options and could be

pushed to take an offensive action, e.g., conduct a first strike, further escalating the crisis.<sup>16</sup>

The Russians are especially unhappy with a perceived U.S. proclivity for taking unilateral action in the Russian “sphere of influence”, the former Warsaw Pact and the former territory of the U.S.S.R., without consulting Russia. As the Russians see the issue, the U.S. completed agreements with both Poland and the Czech Republic while she was still negotiating with the Russians to assuage the latter’s concerns. This is an example of Russian concerns being minimized by the U.S. which is anathema to a core goal of Russia’s national security strategy - to regain prominence in Central Asia and specifically with the Russian *Near Abroad*.

Russia also sees the threat differently and does not believe that either Iran or North Korea currently has the missile capability which would necessitate the U.S.-European missile defense shield.<sup>17</sup> The U.S. maintains that the Iranian threat is real. Iran is currently developing variants of the Shahab-3, with reported ranges from 1000 to 2,500 kilometers, which purportedly have the capability to attack targets in Europe and the Middle East.<sup>18</sup> The North Korean ballistic missile threat is from the Taepo Dong family of missiles, with ranges of 1,500 to 2,500 kilometers for the Taepo Dong 1, and 4,000 to 8,000 kilometers for the Taepo Dong 2. North Korea is also thought to be developing land and sea based medium and intermediate range ballistic missile systems, which would be capable of reaching targets in Europe and the U.S.<sup>19</sup> Russia is not immune to concerns regarding homeland security. While she may not agree on the need for the missile defense shield, she will most likely use diplomatic power through two organizations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the UN, at her

disposal to monitor the actions of both Iran and North Korea, respectively, in regards to this missile threat, thereby addressing another national security strategy goal, that of homeland security.

In 2008, both the Czech Republic and Poland concluded basing agreements (Czech Republic on 3 April and Poland on 14 August) with the U.S. The Czech agreement involves hosting the missile tracking radar and grants the U.S. “exclusive control of the base and operation of all missile defense activities, although the Czech Republic is to be informed promptly of any engagements.”<sup>20</sup> The U.S. is limited to no more than 250 site personnel and must get permission before she may host site visits by non-U.S. personnel.<sup>21</sup> The Czech Senate ratified the agreement in December 2008; the agreement is still under discussion in the Czech Chamber of Deputies as of this writing. The Polish agreement involves basing ten long-range ballistic missile interceptors in Poland. In return, the U.S. would deploy a PATRIOT missile battery to Poland.<sup>22</sup> The Polish Parliament is not expected to consider the agreement until sometime after the new American administration takes office. The Russian entry into Georgia, in August 2008, likely encouraged the Poles to conclude the agreement with the U.S. and made the decision an easier one for the Polish Parliament. While the Russian objections may be political in nature (to incite nationalist support at home and to ensure Russia remains a major player on the international scene and one not to be dismissed), the ramifications of the U.S.-Russian split should not be minimized. Recent Russian threats to place short-range missiles in Kaliningrad may be posturing or a portent of something more serious.<sup>23</sup> Russia may have backed away from these threats



since the U.S. election, but depending on how negotiations go under the next administration, the threat remains.<sup>24</sup>

Much like the U.S./European missile defense shield, NATO invitations to both Georgia and the Ukraine have only heightened Russian security concerns. Throughout her recent history, Russia has relied on the former Warsaw Pact countries to provide a buffer from attack. To a great extent, Russia's concerns with her border security are a direct result of a long history of invasions from east, south and west (twice from Germany in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century). Russia will not accept border countries (the Russian *Near Abroad*) joining a military alliance in which Russia is not a part. If countries such as Georgia and Ukraine join NATO then it would mean Russian influence in these countries would have decreased, further diminishing Russian power in the region and prominence in the international community, which are contrary to these national security strategy goals. Russian Chief of Staff Iurii Baluievskii summed up Russia's thoughts on the issue quite succinctly in 2007, when he stated that his "country's top national security threat" was the U.S. plan to expand its political, military, and economic influence in Russia's traditional sphere of influence.<sup>25</sup> Any U.S. activity in what Russia considers its sphere of influence will create conflict.

Russian activity in both Ukraine, where half the country is pro-West, the other pro-Russia, and Estonia highlight the actions Russia will take to secure its national interests. Even though their economies are tied so closely to that of Russia that it would be difficult to sever any relationship completely, Ukraine and Estonia have tried to flex their independent muscle much to the chagrin of Russia and have suffered the consequences. In 2007, Russia used cyber attacks to punish Estonia for establishing

closer ties with the West by weakening the economy and trying to bring down the Estonian government. Neither the U.S. nor NATO took immediate action to help Estonia. While NATO eventually assisted Estonia to recover from the attacks, this incident could be considered a success from the Russian perspective and for her national security strategy goals.<sup>26</sup> NATO's unwillingness to provide military support for Estonia against her attacker and its delay in coming to Estonia's rescue could be considered a harbinger of things to come - that help may not arrive in a timely manner or at all for a new NATO member. Any doubt in the minds of alliance partners about how much support could be expected from the stronger members of NATO could weaken NATO/U.S. influence on alliance partners and cause prospective members to rethink the advantages of joining NATO, two goals of Russian national security strategy.

In Ukraine, Russia has issued passports to individuals of Russian descent and has fomented discontent amongst her Russian supporters to destabilize the government. Any discussions regarding NATO membership has created, and, will continue to create an internal crisis in Ukraine, between the two camps, the pro-West and pro-Russian, and could result in regime failure. While Russia tolerated membership of the Baltic countries in NATO, it draws the line on the Ukraine. For Russia, Ukraine is a critical cog in its national security strategy. She relies on Ukraine for a warm weather port (Sevastopol which Russia is leasing until 2017) for its Black Sea Fleet and for the major transit points/pipelines for Russian oil and gas exports to the West.<sup>27</sup> Ukraine's transition to a democratic state and eagerness to make her own alliances and political agreements and decrease dependence on a former ally is a danger to Russia for it sets

a precedent for other border countries to follow and adversely impacts the Russian national security goal of regaining primacy over her neighbors.

The 3 December 2008 NATO decision to delay entry of Ukraine and Georgia is most likely NATO recognition that the time is not yet right for further NATO expansion. The NATO excuse for the delay was that neither country was ready for entry, Ukraine because of instability in the government and Georgia due to the August 2008 Russian invasion.<sup>28</sup> Politics and economics are the more likely reasons. Many NATO countries, such as Germany, rely on Russia for the majority of their oil and gas. If NATO were to pursue expansion in light of Russian objections, Russia may decide to punish NATO countries by limiting oil and gas exports to those countries, much like Russia did to Ukraine in the most recent gas crisis in January 2009. Additionally, NATO expansion would require NATO countries to add the new members to its protection envelope, thereby potentially increasing NATO military expenditures at a time of increasing economic problems worldwide. The December 2008 NATO decision is an indication that NATO sees Russia as a force to be reckoned with economically and militarily, which is a successful start for a country wanting to get back into the great power game.

The international balance of power has not remained constant since the end of the Cold War. In the 1990s, instead of a bipolar world with two superpowers, there was really only one, the United States. During the current decade, the balance has been shifting once again, moving in the direction of a multipolar world, with multiple centers of power and with the U.S. somewhat more powerful than the others. In a sense, Russia has been outside the mainstream of the international community since the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Of the probable goals for a new

national security strategy, two primary ones appear to be to move Russia back into the great power community and to bring the United States back from the superpower monopoly to the club of great powers. To accomplish the latter, Russia must constrain U.S. international flexibility in Central Asia and U.S. influence in the former Soviet sphere in general.

While Russia was relegated to the status of a second rate power in the 1990's, Vladimir Putin has been attempting since 2000 to restore Russia to the status of a great power. In Putin's eyes, previous Russian presidents negotiated away much of Russia's power and position. In his annual state of the nation address in April 2005, he stated that "the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And for the Russian people, it became a real drama. Tens of millions of our citizens and compatriots found themselves outside the Russian Federation."<sup>29</sup> In this single quote, one may find Putin's strategic vision for Russia and two critical tenets of Russian national security strategy, rebuilding Russia's great power role and taking care of Russian citizens outside of Russia's boundaries (the *Near Abroad*). Putin will continue to push these strategic goals no matter the risk. He is a product of the KGB. He remembers the Russia of the past and has played to nationalist pride to get support for his agenda. Madeleine Albright as U.S. Secretary of State had many dealings with Putin. Her assessment of him was that he was a very proud man and very Russian. "Some believe Putin's KGB background explains everything, but his allegiance to the KGB is in turn explained by his intense nationalism."<sup>30</sup> These two goals figure prominently in every action taken by Putin with the international community, be it the missile defense or the Ukrainian oil crisis.

Putin sees Russia as a great power. Like previous Russian leaders before him, he has taken on the mantle of nationalism and convinced the Russian people of its importance. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice notes the difference between the Russia in the years following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Russia of today. "This does not excuse Russia's behavior, but it helps to set a context for it. It helps to explain why many ordinary Russians felt relieved and proud when new leaders emerged at the end of the last decade, who sought to reconstitute the Russian state and reassert its power abroad. An imperfect authority was seen as better than no authority at all."<sup>31</sup>

One could point to the situation in the Balkans and resolution of the conflict as the low point in Russian status in the world. The events of Kosovo not only surprised Putin but clearly demonstrated how far removed Russia was from a decision-making role in the international community. The international community chose to ignore Russian entreaties and solve the situation in Serbia by removing Kosovo from Serbian control and providing the mechanism for Kosovo to gain independence as a separate state. NATO essentially ignored Russia's position and alliance with Serbia, and worked the problems in Kosovo without United Nations (UN) sanction. The ensuing air campaign of March 1999 was conducted by NATO without UN sanction and without Russian support. Since Russia was not a member of NATO, she had no veto power as she did under the UN. Even though an ally of Serbia, Russia under then-President Boris Yeltsin was left in the position of watching the action unfold on the sidelines.<sup>32</sup>

NATO eventually did request Russian assistance in negotiating a peace agreement with Serbia, but put Russia back on the sidelines once the agreement was

signed. Negotiations throughout the ensuing years failed to arrive at a resolution to Kosovo's status. Secretary of State Rice summed up the international position on Russia in July 2007, when she stated that "one way or another Kosovo would gain its independence, regardless of Russian opposition at the UN."<sup>33</sup> On 17 February 2008, Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia. The U.S. and the European Union (EU) followed quickly with recognition of Kosovo's independence, much to Russia's dismay.<sup>34</sup>

An important message for Russia in this action was the dangerous precedent this could set for other peoples who were unhappy with the status quo. What prevents the Chechens or other ethnic elements within Russia from declaring their independence from Russia, thus threatening the very existence of the Russian Federation? Ironically, Russia used this "precedent" to justify her actions in Georgia in August 2008, on the behalf of the South Ossetians, claiming there was no difference between the Kosovars wanting independence from Serbia and the South Ossetians wanting to be free from Georgia.<sup>35</sup>

Putin blames the United States for his having to take Russian national security strategy in a more aggressive direction. During Putin's speech at the Munich security conference on 10 February 2007, he put forth the Russian argument succinctly by stating "that for the past 15 years Russia had been meeting the United States halfway on security issues, whereas the United States replied by increasing its military presence in Europe or regarding Russian moves as an expected unilateral retreat. This created the background for the ABM deployment and the CFE deadlock."<sup>36</sup> Putin implied that had Russia taken a more aggressive stance in its relations with the U.S., history would have been different. From the events that transpired, one could argue that Putin

decided to redirect Russia's national security strategy from a defensive mode to an offensive one. It was time for Russia to reassert herself and to no longer be marginalized in the international community. To do this, Putin has taken a page from the U.S. playbook. He noted that the U.S. had no qualms about withdrawing from the ABM Treaty regardless of international reaction if it meant securing her homeland from the perceived threat. She put her national interests above those of the international community and moved forward with a missile defense shield.

Withdrawal from the CFE Treaty was intended to achieve similar results for Russia's national security. With no inspections and information exchanges with which to be concerned, the Russian military had no one monitoring its movements and was able to mobilize and go into Georgia quickly and without prior notice when the situation presented itself. This may have been harder to do if Russia was still an active participant in the CFE Treaty and limited in placing armored forces on its southern flank. In this way, using two elements of national power, diplomatic (withdrawal from the CFE Treaty) and military (troops into Georgia), Russia was able to address a national objective of restoring her role as the major conventional power in the region. She also faced little risk as Putin correctly estimated that the world's focus was on the Iraq and Afghanistan crises.

Russia also addressed its policy toward her *Near Abroad* by justifying the invasion of Georgia to protect the Russian minority in South Ossetia from genocide much like NATO did to protect the Kosovars in Serbia. To follow Putin's train of thought, if the West could take unilateral action to protect oppressed people in Kosovo, then Russia, as Putin justified the situation, could do the same to protect her Russian

minority in South Ossetia. Protection of the Russian *Near Abroad* and her own self-defense were the ends; invasion of Georgia the way; and, Russian military and friendly South Ossetian militia, the means.

Russia did not limit herself to the military element of power. She also used political power in efforts to achieve her goals in the *Near Abroad*. An example of this is Russia's issuance of Russian passports to Russians and sympathetic non-Russian minorities in the *Near Abroad*. Russian dissemination of passports to the Russian nationals in these countries, however, has only succeeded in fueling the fire and instigating dissension amongst the populace.<sup>37</sup> Putin also used political power to coerce her close allies, e.g., Belarus and Kazakhstan, to support the Russian action, though they provided lukewarm support at best.<sup>38</sup>

Putin seeks to increase Russian dominance in the former "Soviet space", and to do this he must have the support of the Russian people in those regions. Acting as a defender of Russian minority rights in the *Near Abroad* is one path to gaining that support. In addition, this policy also gains the Kremlin support at home, inasmuch as there is great sympathy within Russia for those Russians "caught" in the *Near Abroad* by the collapse of the U.S.S.R. It should be noted that the term "Russian" from Moscow's perspective is a rather inclusive term, in that it incorporates non-Russian minorities who find themselves split between Russia and the other former Soviet Republics. Ossetians and Abkhaz are good examples of these non-Russian "Russians." Thus, by supporting "minority rights" in the *Near Abroad*, Russia is also contributing to the larger end of restoring her dominance over the former Soviet Republics, and concurrently restoring her position as an international power.



While Prime Minister Putin currently enjoys a high approval rating amongst the Russian people, he faces an uphill challenge in the former Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union. These countries received their first taste of economic and political freedom under Russian President Gorbachev in the last two years of the Soviet Union and subsequently turned to the West for assistance, much to the dismay of Gorbachev. “Gorbachev was convinced that when these countries got their freedom, they would choose socialism with a human face. He believed they would not turn away from Moscow, nor run off to the West. He thought they would be grateful to Moscow and keep up ties of friendship with the Soviet Union.”<sup>39</sup> Gorbachev and the Russian presidents who followed him clearly underestimated the depth of negative emotions felt by these countries toward their former oppressor. While the Russian minorities in these countries may feel otherwise, the majority of non-Russian peoples has had enough “assistance” from Russia and does not want to be thought of as part of the Russian *Near Abroad*.

The suspension of Russian activity in the CFE Treaty was an important breakpoint, the first of many. Putin asserted the primacy of Russia’s national security interests by suspending Russian activity in the CFE just as the U.S. had done with the ABM Treaty. It was at once payback to the U.S. for American withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in the face of Russian objections, and, simultaneously, an assertion of Russia’s right to act in her own national interests in defiance of international public opinion. Dmitri Trenin captured the essence of Putin’s policy when he wrote “Russian leaders want the United States to recognize their legitimacy, their status as equals among equals at the upper echelon of the international order.”<sup>40</sup> As with the U.S. withdrawal

from the ABM Treaty, public reaction against Russia for suspending activity in the CFE Treaty has been muted.

In theory, from an economic standpoint, Russia has what it needs to be considered a great power. She has territory, the majority of the nuclear and military arms from the former Soviet Union, and economic potential. Economically, Russia has enormous gas and oil reserves and has used these to improve her economic position. Russia is believed to have about 30 percent of the world's natural gas reserves and is second only to Saudi Arabia when it comes to producing oil.<sup>41</sup> The World Bank recently analyzed the impact of the global economic downturn on Russia and estimated that Russia will lose about \$50 billion in net capital this year, but also commended Russia for her swift response, the \$200 billion rescue package, to shore up her financial system.<sup>42</sup> It is too early to tell how successful Russia will be in protecting herself from the current global economic travails.

Russia's abundant natural resources should allow her to achieve her national objective of being a world economic power, if the government uses those as a base on which to build a modern economy. This economic status has already paid unexpected dividends, for it has allowed Russia to take actions which would normally be considered unacceptable to the international community. Withdrawal from the CFE Treaty and the Russian incursion into Georgia are two such actions. While there is disagreement as to whether the CFE Treaty has a formal withdrawal option (the Russians believe it does while NATO does not), NATO will most likely choose not to charge that Russia is in violation as there is too much at stake, both economically and politically.<sup>43</sup> NATO has turned a blind eye for fear of escalating the political atmosphere. NATO members rely a

great deal on Russian crude oil and natural gas and are hesitant to take any action to jeopardize this support. In 2007, Russia provided 38% of gas and 33% of oil to the European Union (E.U.)<sup>44</sup> For the same reason, NATO has taken little action against Russia over the Georgian situation. While it did suspend activity of the NATO/Russia Council for three months, NATO announced in December 2008 that it was going to resume the Council activities on an informal basis.<sup>45</sup> Punishment for the Russian incursion into Georgia was worth three months of sitting in the corner. While NATO nations continue to look for alternate sources of crude oil and gas, there are no quick fixes. Russia remains the E.U.'s main supplier of oil and gas.

Russia, however, is just as dependent on her consumers as they are on Russia. This symbiotic relationship also makes Russia vulnerable to fluctuations in the world oil/gas prices and vulnerable to the demands of transit countries. She has taken action to increase customer dependency by creating a virtual oil and gas monopoly and targeted countries who have tried to profit or look for alternatives to the Russian supply lines. Russia stopped pumping natural gas through the Ukraine in both January 2006 and 2009, after major disagreements on the price of gas. The 2006 incident was resolved after two days following protests from Europe, since the pipeline through Ukraine is the only current method to get natural gas supplies to both Central and Western Europe.<sup>46</sup> The 2009 incident took nineteen days to resolve and caused an international panic, as Europe was in the midst of one of its worst winters.

To deliver gas to Europe, Russian pipelines run through the territory of Ukraine. Russia provides the gas, Ukraine, as the transit country, pays Russia for the gas and taxes the gas transiting through its territory. As Russia and Ukraine operate on annual

contracts, these contracts are heavily dependent upon current gas prices and the status of the Russian/Ukrainian relationship. Russia used the recent downturn in prices and Ukraine's desire to join NATO, to increase the price it charges Ukraine to a level comparable to other European customers. Russia used economic power to punish Ukraine for cozying up to NATO by arguing that since Ukraine wanted out of the Russian sphere, then she should no longer receive a Russian discount but pay what the other European customers pay for gas.<sup>47</sup>

Russia has a long history of threatening to cut off gas supplies when negotiations do not go well or if she dislikes an action taken by one of her neighbors. This "oil-gas blackmail" is risky and not a constructive strategy for a supplier who wants to keep its customers. Russia still has the upper hand in most negotiations, however, because she is the only game, or pipeline, in town.

Russia also continues to look for ways to secure its oil and gas delivery capability to the EU and other customers without disruptions by intermediaries. By bypassing the *Near Abroad*, Russia will be able to use the "energy weapon" to influence those countries in the *Near Abroad* without disrupting supplies to the other European countries. Russia's Baltic Pipeline System expansion will also enable her to provide oil direct to European markets without having to transit through Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Russia is also revisiting the proposed pipeline that would deliver oil from Siberia to China.<sup>48</sup>

Russia is also actively pursuing other ways to increase her oil and gas reserves. Within the past year, the Russian navy has resumed its activity in the Arctic Sea near the Svalbard archipelago. This area is thought to be rich in oil, gas, and precious metal

reserves. The Treaty of Paris in 1920 was a first attempt to regulate the economic activity in the archipelago. Since the discovery of oil and gas resources, the treaty has been interpreted differently by the competing parties. Norway claims the entire area and the right to establish a 200 mile economic zone. Russia takes an opposing view and debunks any Norwegian claim of sovereignty over the seas. Currently, Russia is in an excellent position as only Russia and Norway are the primary competitors with formally established footprints in the area.<sup>49</sup>

The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the treaty which governs activity in the Arctic, states that “any littoral state can lay claim to territory within 200 nautical miles of its shoreline and can develop any resources within that zone...the distance can expand to up to some 350 miles if the littoral state can provide scientific proof that the undersea continental plate is a natural extension of its territory.”<sup>50</sup>

In May 2008, the United States, Norway, Canada, Russia, and Denmark agreed to start talks on how to proceed in the Arctic and how to share its natural resources. The U.S. National Geologic Survey estimates that up to “20% of the world’s hydrocarbon reserves could be under the Arctic Ocean.”<sup>51</sup> While it may take years for exploitation, which is dependent on the effect of global warming melting the ice cap and whether the expense to exploit the resources outweighs the costs, this could become a future international hotspot with many countries competing for exploitation rights. Russia intends to play a significant role in this region. In September 2008, Russian President Medvedev stated that “Our priority task is to turn the Arctic into Russia’s resource base of the 21st century. In order to fulfill this task, we should first resolve a number of special issues. The main issue is to ensure and firmly defend Russia’s

national interests in that region."<sup>52</sup> Exploitation of the resources in the Arctic would positively impact future Russian economic prospects and her ability to be recognized as a world economic power (two key parts of Russia's national security strategy).

The UN is now in the middle of this debate and has given countries until May 2009 to provide the proof required. A potential contentious area is the Lomonosov Ridge, which is a 1,800 kilometer section of the continental shelf claimed by Russia, Canada, and Denmark.<sup>53</sup> Exploitation of the Arctic will be a hot topic in future NATO discussions. It would be very surprising if any country agreed to grant this untapped resource-rich environment to the exclusive use of any one country. There is too much at stake and too many competing national interests involved.

Putin understands that to be a great power, one must have a strong economy and a professional military. He now needs to identify appropriate courses of action to achieve these goals. Economic power becomes a means to another end, to build up Russia's military forces, which were sorely ignored under previous Russian administrations. Reports of problems with military professionalism and outdated equipment coming out of Georgia following the Russian invasion have been favorite topics in the Russian press.<sup>54</sup> Russia has attempted to address these concerns by taking advantage of the State Department's Peace and Security (PS) funding it has received through the years to demilitarize her munitions stockpile.<sup>55</sup> This funding stream has permitted Russia to expend more of her military budget on upgrading her aging military equipment instead of having to use it on demilitarization actions. Russia's successful utilization of these funding streams combined with the robust (until the recent global economic downturn) Russian economy has enabled Russia to increase her

spending on the military. The military budget in 2007 was \$31.6 billion and is expected to be 20% higher in 2008.<sup>56</sup> While still lower than the Cold War levels, it does show a concerted effort to upgrade the military, which is still the largest in the former U.S.S.R.

The recent Russian activity in Georgia has caused some in Congress to question the amount of funding provided to Russia, but the funds continue to flow. PS funding for FY07 was \$4.66 million and is estimated at \$11.28 million for FY08.<sup>57</sup> These funds do not include the funding provided by other Foreign Operations Appropriated Assistance to include “Governing Justly and Democratically” and “Investing in People” which are estimated at \$40.65 million and \$26.12 million respectively for FY08.<sup>58</sup> Funding from the 1992 Nunn Lugar legislation which created the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program is estimated at \$434.1 million for FY08.<sup>59</sup> This funding has been critical to securing nuclear weapons stockpiles within the former Soviet Union. Russia also receives funding (Administration request for \$50 million in FY08) under the Freedom Support Act (FSA) for democratization, market reform, and social and humanitarian aid.<sup>60</sup> The total funding stream available to Russia from U.S. taxpayers over the past two years has exceeded half a billion dollars. While these funds cannot go directly into Russian military expenditures, they offset Russian state expenditures, and the offset can be added to the defense budget.

Russia has taken several courses of action in pursuit of her national security strategy goals vis-à-vis her neighbors, to regain a preponderant position and neutralize the United States ability to operate in the former Soviet space. Upon the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia attempted to develop bilateral diplomatic and economic relations with these neighbors. She created the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

(SCO), in 2001, composed of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, to resolve border disputes and more recently to consider increasing military cooperation, military exercises, and intelligence sharing.<sup>61</sup> The SCO is slowly gaining momentum in Eurasia. Recent newsworthy activity of the SCO includes the 2005 demand for the U.S. to withdraw her troops from Uzbekistan and the March 2008 Iranian request to become a permanent member of the SCO.<sup>62</sup> Some experts believe that “a stronger SCO, particularly one with a military component and Iran as a full member, might serve as a check to U.S. interests and ambitions in the region.”<sup>63</sup>

The SCO demand that the U.S. withdraw from Uzbekistan is an example of Russia’s effort paying dividends. In addition, the SCO offers Russia some leverage over U.S. operations in Afghanistan, especially if Pakistan ceases to provide reliable lines of communications to American and NATO troops in Afghanistan. The SCO, however, is not a rubber stamp for Russian activity as evidenced by the failure of the SCO to recognize South Ossetian independence.

Alternatively, the SCO does provide Russia the opportunity to address another national security goal, that of limiting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Russia understands the threat from WMD and has been cooperating with the U.S. for many years to prevent their proliferation, as evidenced by her votes for sanctions in the UN. Since Iran is a state which is anxious to acquire nuclear technology, it would make sense for Russia to use the SCO to bring Iran into Russia’s orbit and to support Iran’s “peaceful” nuclear program, thereby keeping an eye on Iranian technology developments to ensure that she does not take any action which would lead to further development or proliferation of WMD. A nuclear-capable Iran so



close to Russian borders is not in Russia's national interests. Membership in the SCO would also make it harder for Iran to play fast and loose in Central Asia. While the SCO gives Russia the opportunity to cooperate with Iran, especially if Iran becomes a full SCO member, Iran is also a competitor of Russia in the world oil market. Through the SCO Russia can keep an eye out on her new friends and economic competitors in both Iran and China. As stated in an old Russian proverb, it is best to keep your friends close and your enemies closer!

Russian-American relations have cooled since the upturn in the relationship immediately following the September 11, 2001 attacks and the partnership against terrorists. The NATO-Russia Council, which was established in May 2002, to open dialogue between NATO and Russia on a myriad of topics, such as terrorist threat assessment, arms control, defense reform, and military-to-military cooperation, was suspended following the Russian entry into Georgia in August 2008.<sup>64</sup> While there is some question as to how useful this forum may have been, there can be no doubt that it did provide a necessary venue for communication between NATO and Russia. While many issues remain unresolved, NATO has decided that the NATO-Russia Council is worth reviving. On December 2, 2008, NATO announced that it was reconstituting the NATO/Russia Council to reengage with Russia.<sup>65</sup>

Russian President Medvedev has taken varying approaches to the Russian/American relationship. During the American Presidential campaign, there was hostile rhetoric toward U.S. actions in the former Warsaw Pact.<sup>66</sup> Once the election was completed, Medvedev changed his tactics. He, like Putin, has taken his cue from the American approach. If the U.S. can enter into the perceived Russian sphere of interest,

e.g., the former Warsaw Pact and U.S.S.R. republics, then Russia should be able to do the same in the perceived American sphere of interest, e.g., South America. This could be one explanation for the sudden visit by President Medvedev to Venezuela in November 2008.<sup>67</sup> Medvedev may also be testing the U.S. to see what type of action, if any, she will take to counter this Russian intrusion into the Western Hemisphere.

Now that the inauguration of President Obama has occurred, both the U.S. and Russia appear to be taking small steps to repair the damage in the relationship. President Obama appears open to revisiting arms control treaties and European missile defense shield, while the Russians may be willing to relook missile defense plans for Kaliningrad.<sup>68</sup> The Russian strategy vis-à-vis the U.S. is very fluid, however, and appears to change daily. The recent announcement by Kyrgyzstan, at Russia's urging, that it intends to close the American airbase at Manas, is a clear example of this fluidity.<sup>69</sup>

Former Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill once said that "All politics is local."<sup>70</sup> This is indeed true for Russia as well. For the Russian national security strategy to be successful, it must have the backing of the Russian people. Putin and Medvedev have a balancing act to contend with, one involving the new middle class, Russians who have now seen how the other side lives and are satisfied with the lives they are making and the freedoms they enjoy, and the ultra conservatives, who would be happy to return to the Soviet way of life. What Russia is now experiencing is a type of democracy, Russian style, with capitalism as a topping. The economic crisis has hit Russia hard as it has the rest of the world. While the Russian economic picture looked rosy a year or two ago, it is no longer the case. With the cost of oil now well below \$50 per barrel,

Russian leaders may be unable to resource all they want to accomplish in the new national security strategy. It remains to be seen how much risk they will be willing to take and how they will manage the expectations of the Russian people if they choose to pursue an aggressive vice conservative approach to accomplishing this strategy.

Based on Russia's policies under Putin and Medvedev, the outlines of the new national security strategy can be discerned. This strategy focuses on regional security (creating a buffer between Russia and the West) and blunting NATO expansion on her borders; homeland security and protection from terrorists and the proliferation of WMD; taking care of Russian citizens outside of Russia's boundaries (the Near Abroad); economic power (having the resources to grow, influence, and lead economic powers); international prominence (to be relevant and consulted in the manner of an equal partner or global power, a great power); regaining the primacy she once held over her neighbors; and, neutralizing the U.S. ability to operate freely in the Eurasian region (without Russian support). Russia will need to use all available resources, to include political, diplomatic, military, and economic, to ensure success of her national security strategy.

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<sup>70</sup> Tip O'Neill and Gary Hymel, *All Politics is Local: and Other Rules of the Game* (New York: Times Books, 1994).